REPORT OF THE RARE BOOK DEPARTMENT

For the Year Ending June 30, 1936

The Department's second year in new quarters at Low Memorial Library saw it well established and making the best of an unavoidable provisorium. Provided with an adequate and willing staff, the department has been functioning perhaps more smoothly than in past years, and is settling down to the performance of its steady functions in the library system of Columbia University. There are probably no statistics to indicate how many years it takes a new library to outgrow its diapers, to wear its first long trousers, and to come of age. After six years of much nursing, some petting, a little spoiling, and a little scolding, our department, still the youngest of all in the Library, is beginning to reward its indulgent parents, we hope, not only with its own health and well-being, but, perhaps more important, by becoming a really useful member of the community.

STAFF

On July 1st, 1935, Mr. Sidney Kramer left us to take graduate work at the Library School of Chicago University. With his departure the Library lost a loyal and enthusiastic assistant, whose first professional years coincided with the first years of the department. His place was taken by Mr. Samuel Ives, who came to us from a position in the Rare Book Department of the Library of Congress. Following the line of his greatest interest and training, Mr. Ives took particular care of the medieval material in the Library. He has arranged and reshelved all the material in the vault, and begun a detailed revision of our Incunabula Catalogue. The entire collection of incunabula has now been checked by

the shelf list, and missing information as to imprint and title has been added wherever available. A preliminary listing of the entire collection has been completed, and separate files arranged by author, printer, place of printing and date respectively. Moreover, the final catalogue, based upon the "Gesamtkatalog," has made satisfactory progress. All incunabula up to and including the year 1480 have been catalogued (45 volumes), and the rest should be completed this coming year. The next step will be a similar treatment of the medieval manuscripts. In this way a substantial advance will be made towards the much needed record of vault material in the departmental catalogue.

Towards the end of the year, Mr. Walter P. Hering, in charge of newspaper preservation, left the Low Memorial Library to take charge of the photostatic work in South Hall. Although not a member of the staff, he has been a most helpful neighbor and friend, and we shall miss his ever-resourceful assistance in the arranging of exhibitions and in numberless little details of daily routine.

At the end of January, Miss Annabelle Mosher, who had come to fill the new position of secretary to the Department upon the occupation of Low Memorial Library, left to become secretary to Miss Belle da Costa Greene, director of the Morgan Library. While we were extremely sorry to lose a most efficient and competent collaborator, the department nevertheless is glad to know that the experience of a year and a half here has done much to qualify her for her new responsibilities. Her place was taken by Miss Helen Corbett, who has not only taken a competent hold of the routine duties, but has identified herself with the work of the department, doing much to make her office what it is supposed to be - a center

of information and communication for all of Low Memorial Library. Her inauguration of the custom of a daily tea hour, with invitations to other people working in the building, has made the office available as a center for informal social gatherings.

FUNCTIONING OF THE DEPARTMENT

According to one definition, a Rare Book Department in a big library exists not so much in the assembling of certain volumes on its shelves as in the care of all valuable material in the Library regardless of location. From this point of view, one of the most significant steps since the beginning of the department has been the new arrangement whereby Miss von Dobeneck is to look after the repairing and rebinding of valuable older books. It is sincerely hoped that her services may continue to be available not only for the Avery Library and the Rare Book Department, but in all cases where expert craftsmanship and intelligent affection are called for.

The general as well as the special collections of the department have been consulted with growing frequency. The arrangement by which each member of our staff is in charge of a special collection is bearing new fruit from year to year, as familiarity with the material in our care grows and the resources become better known to the outside world. With the possible exception of the Smith Library, it is probably true of all our collections that much could be done to make their resources known to those who could profit by this knowledge. Very interesting, in this regard, is the fact that Higgs' Bibliography of Economics, 1751-1775 (1935), has not taken into account the material of the Seligman Library. A check-up revealed the fact that 281 titles in the Seligman Library were not recorded among the 6,741 items mentioned by Higgs.

Another collection that undoubtedly is not sufficiently known is the Epstean Collection of Photography and Photographic Reproduction. Definite proof of this is on hand and plans to remedy this situation are now under consideration.

Various members of the faculty have kept up a gratifying custom of former years. They have again brought over groups of their students to inspect small exhibits prepared to illustrate certain phases of class work.

The visiting Professor of English, Professor Frederick S. Boas, formerly of the University College, London, spent much time in consulting the collection of old plays in the vault, and, after his return to England, published an article in the London Times Literary Supplement for April 25, 1936, entitled "Old Plays in Columbia University."

Good use has been made of the typographical collections by faculty members who found themselves confronted by publication and printing problems.

Particularly stimulating to the work of the department, and, we hope, of real usefulness to students and instructors, was the holding of a number of courses in the Seminar Room and in the Workshop of the department. Apart from the regular Library School instruction in book production, the following courses have been given at Low Memorial Library:

The Art of Hand Bookbinding. Kathryn and Gerhard Gerlach, Winter and Spring Terms, 105 Low Memorial Library.

Typography and the Preparation of Material for Printing and Publishing. Mr. John Clyde Oswald, Winter and Spring Terms, 102 Low Memorial Library.

Book Design and Production. Mr. Robert Josephy, Winter Term, 102 Low Memorial Library.

Lettering and Art Work in Book Design and Book Jackets. Georg Salter, Winter and Spring Terms, 102 Low Memorial Library.

The Book Study Club has again brought many book lovers, among them former students of the University, faculty members, and local librarians, as well as collectors and printers, to Low Memorial Library. The past year was the fifth of the Club's activities, and this was its program:

Meetings Held in Low Memorial Library

January 13th - Informal talk by Miss von Dobeneck of the Columbia University Bindery, and demonstration of her work on repairing fine books.

February 3 - Talk by Boris Artzybasheff on his work as a decorative book illustrator.

March 9 - "An Evening at the Chinese Department of the University." Far Eastern books and printing.

May 4 - Talk by Houston Peterson on Book Illustration, especially of the "Divine Comedy."

Other Meetings

November 4, The Morgan Library - Exhibition of armorial bindings. Dinner at the Blue Ribbon beforehand.

December 2, The New York Public Library - Special showing of the Mark Twain Exhibition.

April 6, The New York Public Library - Talk by Mr. George Freedley on the Theater Collection.

One of the most grateful users of the Department collections, last year, was the curator, who is glad to report the completion of a work on book arts and industries in America, written in collaboration

with Miss Ruth S. Granniss and Mr. Lawrence C. Wroth, and to be published in German by Karl W, Hiersemann in Leipzig. The use of the library for this work has, among other things, resulted in an extensive bibliography of American printing history, which undoubtedly could be turned to good use in completing our materials in that field. A preliminary resumé of some interesting findings in this study was published in an article on American printing history in the Independent Journal of Columbia University of October 18, 1935.

In another article, on "Lucian Bernhard - Calligrapher and Type Designer," in the March 1936 issue of P. M. Magazine, the importance of personal craftsmanship in the production of contemporary printing type was investigated by the curator. The same motive was enlarged and brought to bear upon all branches of the graphic arts in a comprehensive lecture, "Industrialization and Graphic Arts Education," given at the Fifteenth Annual Conference on Printing Education in Baltimore on June 30.

It may not be inappropriate in a library report to mention another interesting experience along similar lines. The Librarian of the Bronxville High School had for some time noticed the children's lack of respect for the books in the library and had regretted the resulting bad treatment which the volumes received. To remedy this in some way or other, the Library Committee cast about for a suitable exhibit of educational value. After unsuccessfully bidding for the cooperation of some institutions in the city, the school was final able to enlist the cooperation of the American Institute of Graphic Arts and to show at Bronxville a selection of the annual "Fifty Books of the Year" exhibition. Invited to come and talk at the opening of the show on Friday, April 24, 1936, the curator had the somewhat ticklish task of enlarging upon typographic niceties to an

audience of some 500 school children.

EXHIBITIONS

Last year, the exhibition of "Modern Bookbinding - New Design in an Old Craft," seems to have been a real success, and much has been made of it in the Bibliotheca Columbiana, University Quarterly, and in many trade papers, not to mention the daily New York newspapers. One thing that we hoped for the exhibit certainly did accomplish, and that was to impress upon the University community as well as upon a wider public the new function of Room 203 as our exhibition room. Accordingly, the task of making the several exhibitions held there this year known to the public, and of getting an attendance that would repay our efforts, was a comparatively easy one.

In July 1935, the American Institute of Graphic Arts, as in former years, sent up their selection of the "Fifty Books" of 1934. Following this, and lasting through the year and up to the end of the winter session, came our own annual exhibition of general bookmaking history. On January 21, on the occasion of Dr. Smith's 76th birthday, a short showing of the mathematical instruments recently given by him to the University was opened. In response to many demands for a more extended showing of the wonderful material in this collection, another exhibition was held from April 6 to April 30th.

From January 31 to March 31 there was an exhibition with the following title: "Early Modern Trade Bookbindings, Stone & Kimball, 1893-1897, Copeland & Day, 1895-1898; Bookbindings and Cover Designs, W. A. Dwiggins; Bookjackets, European & American, Georg Salter - An Exhibition at Low Memorial Library, Columbia University." Supplementing the 1935 exhibition of fine hand bindings, this exhibition was planned

to show some characteristic and interesting trends in commercial bookbinding and book covers. With its display of three significant separate phases, the exhibition provided an interesting opportunity for comparison and evaluation.

The last exhibition of the year was in many ways the most interesting of them all. "A Collector's Choice - Illustrating the Growth of a Private Library," was held from May 7 to June 3. Drawing from the resources of an anonymous friend of the Library, the exhibit demonstrated the growth of a real book collection - from simple reading editions of favorite authors, and bibliographical reference books, to English and American first editions, and to books of unusual artistic interest.

Books from the Seligman collection were sent to the Grolier Club's exhibition of "Tudor and Stewart Travel Books," held there from February 21 to March 10, 1936.

A part of the old Paige Typesetting machine, traditionally connected with Mark Twain and entrusted to the University by the Mergenthaler Linotype Company was lent to the New York Public Library for their big centennary Mark Twain exhibition.

BUDGET

The financial outlook for the department at the beginning of the year was anything but brilliant. However, with some liberal allowances from the friendly Currier fund, and with exceptional gifts from friends, the year turned out to be unexpectedly remunerative. We gladly acknowledge at this time the grant of a thousand dollar budget for the coming year, which, accepting the recommendation of last year's report, will enable us to pursue a better planned, and, we hope, more effective purchasing policy.

PURCHASES

The history of many a private, and of some public, collections, is intimately associated with the names of certain prominent dealers. University libraries, however, are rarely in a position to avail themselves of the services of the barons of Rare Book trading. Our small annual budget is probably the reason why few American dealers have really taken the trouble to find out what we are looking for and to make feasible offers. But as time goes on, there do seem to turn up a few dealers who understand our needs as well as our pocket book. Mr. Byrne Hackett, of the Brick Row Book Shop, and Mr. Sloog, of the French Book Corporation, for instance, know what we are after and understand what sort of prices we can pay. One pleasant new contact, the by-product of a skiing trip to the Green Mountains, is the connection with Mr. Charles E. Tuttle of Rutland, Vermont, from whom we are getting many low-priced slender volumes of great interest and usefulness.*

GIFTS

Two gifts we are particularly proud of: A copy of the new Oxford University Bible, printed by Mr. Bruce Rogers, and given us by an anonymous friend of Mr. Rogers with the cooperation of other anonymous donors; and a gift of Mr. Lucius Wilmerding, the noted New York book collector, who very generously made it possible for us to acquire one of the masterpieces of the 1935 bookbinding exhibition - a monograph on the architecture of Copenhagen City Hall, by F. Hendriksen and Francis Beckett, bound in a splendid modern binding by Anker Kyster, master binder of Copenhagen, and carrying out designs by the Danish artist Valdemar Andersen.

Another outstanding modern volume shown in that exhibition, an illustrated German edition of the Revelation of St. John, bound by Mr. Otto Fratzscher of Offenbach, was purchased by the University with a

* Just at the end of the academic year, an interesting group of modern polish illustrated books was purchased for R.B. from Currier money.

substantial contribution gathered from numerous small donations.

Other welcome gifts include a number of fine old volumes donated by Mr. C. C. Kalbfleisch; a set of specimens of the Labratory press, given us by Mr. Porter Garnett, formerly of the Carnegie Institute of Technology; a group of current books illustrated with motion picture stills by Crosset and Dunlap; examples of the current output of the Spiral Press in New York; book jackets by Mr. Georg Salter; dummies of books designed by Mr. Ernest Reichl for various publishers; the interesting designs by Mr. W. A. Dwiggins for Sigrid Undset's "The Wild Orchid," shown in our February exhibition, and contributed by Mr. Sidney R. Jacobs of Alfred A. Knopf; a set of her hand-made marble paper by Mrs. Loring; and last, but not least, additions from Mr. Epstean to the library of Photography and Photo-engraving.

CATALOGUING

This is an account of the cataloguing activities in the year covered by the report:

New Books - 270 (284 vols.)

Recatalogued - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -111 (135 vols.)

Reclassed - 147 (171 vols.)

Analytics- 1070

This does not include the some 75 press books catalogued by Sidney Kramer before he left, the 017 books catalogued by Miss Terry, the incunabula catalogued by Mr. Ives, the serials catalogued by the Main Catalogue Department, the Smith Library cataloguing done by Miss Frick, or the listing doen for the Seligman.

The recataloguing of the books transferred from the Main Library, which formed the nucleus of our book arts and industries collection, has been fairly well cleared out. This recataloguing should be finished by next fall. The cataloguing of new books has been kept up to date.

The next large class of books to be catalogued is the Epstean Library, upon the classification of which Dr. Lehmann-Haupt is now working.

BINDING AND REPAIR

The most important new development, the arrangement with Miss von Dobeneck, has already been mentioned. Otherwise the binding has progressed a little slowly. Arrangements have been made, however, by which the summer months of 1936 are being employed to reduce the overhanging bulk of unbound material, and to settle down to a comfortable and adequate speed of binding.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The activities of the special collections are recorded by the librarians in charge as follows:

David Eugene Smith Mathematical Library

(Reported by Miss Bertha Frick)

The collection was considerably increased this year by the gift from Dr. Smith of two hundred and seventy-five mathematical and astronomical instruments of historical interest. By means of this valuable addition many of the principles set forth in treatises in the library are concretely illustrated. A large number of the measuring rods used in different countries, as well as the many sets of weights contained in the collection, furnish interesting material for the historical study of weights and measures. In this field the Smith Library supplements the splendid collection of books and pamphlets given to the library by Mr. Dale.

Outstanding items include several celestial spheres of the seventeenth century. One of these is from Japan, made of papier maché; another is of Hindu origin, of bronze with realistic silver stars; while a third is from Persia, made by the grandson of Maddad, the emperor Humayun's chief astronomer. A telescope made by the famous English instrument maker, Jesse Ramsden, about 1775, is still in working order. A rare group of

old English tally sticks dating from about 1296 have an interesting history. They were found in the Chapel of the Pyx, Westminster, in 1906, where they had lain undisturbed for six hundred years. One of the pieces found there bears the name of William de Costello, who was sheriff in 1296. The ancient English tallies were ordered burned in 1834, and it is said that owing to the extra fires made up for this purpose, the Houses of Parliament were destroyed. Other devices used for calculating include counters, rods and abaci from Arabia, China, Japan and Russia. Astrolabes of intricate and delicate workmanship and from many lands show the development of this ancient scientific instrument. There are interesting examples of the quadrant, one of the most useful instruments of medieval times. About fifty sundials from Europe and Asia show its construction in ivory, bronze, silver and wood. Many of the instruments are works of art, being engraved with great care and delicacy, some of them bearing the maker's name or initials.

The exhibition of some of these instruments and books relating to them, and a tea given to Dr. Smith by the library staff on January 21 in celebration of his 76th birthday, have already been mentioned. At that time there was presented to Dr. Smith a Festschrift issued in his honor, edited by Dr. George Sarton and sponsored by the History of Science society. The book includes a description of the contents of the library, as well as a chronological list of the historical, pedagogical and critical writings of Dr. Smith.

It is to be hoped that another year will see suitable cases provided for the display of the instruments. They are now temporarily housed in book cases, which are relatively safe but not permanently suitable. Also they are stored in a rather inaccessible place so that every

time a student wishes to consult them (which is frequent) the librarian must spend her time with the reader, as the room is not open to the public. By the provision of proper cases and display room, not only would the instruments have an adequate setting, but the librarian's time would be available for other duties.

The library received as a gift from Dean Herbert Hawkes a letter signed by Sylvester, Newcomb and others. This is a valuable and welcome addition to the sixty autograph letters of Sylvester in the library.

The splendid assistants that we have had during this year have been much appreciated. Practically all of this librarian's time could be devoted to the Smith collection in contrast with preceding years when much of her time was spent at the desk for the Rare Book Department. In addition, this section had the part-time assistance of a Columbia college student who polished all the instruments, helped arrange the exhibits, removed old call numbers with the electric eraser, and made a portrait index of the books which have been catalogued. This furnishes a valuable supplement to the large collection of portraits in the collection.

The amount of reference work increases each year as the resources of the library become better known. Many out-of-town scholars are making good use of the library through the medium of the photostat.

There have now been catalogued all the general histories of mathematics, all the biographies of mathematicians and more than half of the histories of arithmetic. By another year it is hoped that the cataloguing of the latter will be finished as well as all the texts of arithmetic before 1850. The cataloguing of the histories of algebra and geometry and early texts in these fields will follow. The cataloguing

statistics for the period from September 1, 1935, to May 31, 1936, are:

Titles - 50

Volumes - 52

Volumes of Pamphlets - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 11

Analytics - 113

Dale Library of Weights and Measures

There have been no important additions to the Dale Library of Weights and Measures. Some reference use has been made of the library.

Seligman Library of Economics

(Reported by Miss Janet Bogardus)

A most interesting collection of manuscripts and printed items of French finance was bought by Dr. Seligman for the library this year. There are some 650 pieces, including posters, placards, bank notes, paper money, laws, decrees, and all sorts of government announcements and official declarations pertaining to finance from the time of Louis XIV to the Restoration. Dr. Seligman bought this unusual collection as a lot from Maggs Bros., booksellers of Paris. He has also added in this field a collection of some 200 pamphlets of French fiscal literature of the 18th century, and three volumes of the manuscripts of John Law.

Another recent purchase made by Dr. Seligman is The Customers Apology by Thomas Milles, which is the fourth of the rare and valuable Milles tracts to be added to the Library.

Thirty items on early American communities and the doctrines associated with those communities was an important addition to the library this year. The titles include pamphlets and bound volumes dealing with the Shakers, the Harmony Society, Owenism and the New Harmony

Movement. Fourierism, Brook Farm and the Phalanxes, Hopedale Community, the Icarian Community and the Oneida Community.

These are only some of the more interesting and large acquisitions. Dr. Seligman adds to the library continually, particularly in the field of French finance of the 18th century.

Quite a bit of bibliographical work has been done for Dr. Seligman this year in connection with the library and with the book which he is now writing. One interesting check was made with Higgs' Bibliography of Economics, 1751-1775. (1935). 281 items were found in the Seligman library, not mentioned in Higgs, which are, accordingly, to be included in a supplement, when printed.

Possibly the most important recommendation to be made concerning the work and care of the library has to do with binding and mounting. Although the library and Dr. Seligman, together, had 100 volumes bound this spring in addition to all the new acquisitions which Dr. Seligman usually has bound as he buys them, there are still many books in paper covers which should be put into permanent bindings, and many more which badly need repairing or rebinding, both in order to preserve the books, and for the sake of the appearance of the library as a whole. Besides this, some provision should be made for the mounting of the large collection of broadsides, now kept in manila folders in a vertical file. At least it should be possible to have the new broadsides mounted as they are added, and it would be very helpful, both for the preservation of the sheets and the greater ease with which they could be handled, if gradually the whole collection could be mounted.

The Seligman Library is very comfortably housed now in Room 210, a room which is nicely suited to the size of the library, and which dis-

plays it quite adequately. Dr. Seligman seems pleased with the present arrangements.

Epstean Library of Photography

Mr. Epstean has added new books and periodicals to the library from time to time. There is now in the library a set of Mr. Epstean's collected works on photography, seven volumes, including his translations of three standard works on photography: Potonniée's Histoire de la découverte de la photographie; Eder's Geschichte der Photographie; and Fouque's La vérité sur l'invention de la photographie.

It is the plan now to catalogue the Epstean Library during the coming year, and, possibly, to print a catalogue.

LOOKING AHEAD

The news that Columbia University is to receive as a gift the library of the late Mr. George A. Plimpton is of great consequence to the University Library, and will present new responsibilities as well as new opportunities to the Rare Book Department. Naturally, the questions of room changes, new equipment, cases, etc., are the first ones to present themselves, and they cannot be solved without the support of the University administration. Nevertheless, whatever arrangements will be made, the staff of the department is looking forward to its new duties with great anticipation.

Plans for rearrangements in Room 210, and, subsequently, for the establishment of a reading-room in 205 are under consideration. In addition to these alterations, two minor improvements are recommended which would greatly facilitate the work of the department and contribute much to making the quarters in the Low Memorial Library building as livable as possible without great cost and without interfering in any way

with the final architectural changes that are being considered.

The Exhibition Room, which has already proved a most useful part of our equipment and activities, could be considerably improved by some very modest additions to its decorations. They are: curtains for the windows, and some runners to cover the floor, where not covered with exhibition cases.

Room 103. This is the little room between the seminar room and the vault. In the course of the last year we found in the basement a little hand press, which, through the kind offices of Mr. Robert L. Leslie, of the P. M. Magazine, was restored into a condition of usefulness. Members of the Book Study Club are ready to work this press, and by an arrangement with them and the Library it will be possible to print not only the announcements of the Book Study Club, but also to do a certain amount of library printing, such as posters, invitations, exhibition cards, ets. Also, we have for a long time felt the need of an informal place to serve as a staff rest-room. The little room downstairs could very well serve the two purposes of housing the press and its modest equipment, and as a staff room. There is a third function which the room could fulfill without interfering with either of the aforementioned purposes. The space in Room 102 devoted to the housing of our fine book collections is practically filled, and additional cases will be needed in the near future. The alterations necessary to fit the room for these purposes would be small, and would involve the following items: Complete cleaning out of the furniture and other materials stored in the room, painting the walls, cleaning the floor, fixing the lights, installing a few glass-door book shelves, and the putting in of one couch, one easy

chair, and a little smoking table.

Another detail which might be mentioned here, is the advisability of a telephone connection from the offices of the Rare Book Department to Room 112, the headquarters of the janitors in the building. At the present time, when the secretary is alone in the office, it is practically impossible for her to get in touch with a janitor as she cannot leave the office. Both from the point of view of convenience and of safety, a telephone connection would seem advisable.

BROADSIDE MATERIAL

The need for more adequate care of broadside material has already been mentioned in Miss Bogardus' report on the Seligman library. Both for the Seligman material as well as for the general collections, it is advisable to make arrangements for permanent safeguarding. Miss von Dobeneck has tentatively mounted certain items of special value, and a moderate supply of mounting board has been laid in. What is needed is mounting board in sufficient quantity to take care of the Seligman material, and an appropriation for a number of boxes. One additional counter-height wooden shelf is also advisable.

This equipment has already been estimated and submitted in connection with the plans for the establishment of a print collection. While no definitive decision has been reached about this, the need for proper treatment of the broadside material remains urgent.

Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt

DAVID EUGENE SMITH MATHEMATICAL LIBRARY

Annual Report

July 1, 1936

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Another exhibit of the instruments qas open to the public from April 6-30.

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Bertha Frick

Librarian, David Eugene Smith
Mathematical Library